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NEWSLETTER of the COMMODORE COMPUTER USERS GROUP (QLD) INC.

AMIGA EDITION

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MEETINGS – WHERE & WHEN

MAIN MEETING is held on Tuesday 7th June (7 pm - 10 pm) in the Bardon Professional Development Centre, 390 Simpsons Rd Bardon. The entrance is through the Centre's Car Park in Carwoola Street.
Doors open 7 pm (Library & Sales). The meeting starts at 8 pm sharp.

====> ROD PALMER: PACKET RADIO & AMIGA <====

AMIGA WORK SHOP is held on Sunday 12th June 1988 (1 pm - 5 pm) in the Ithaca R.S.L. Hall, corner of Nash & Elizabeth Sts, Rosalie.

NEW PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE

BEGINNERS CORNER

Opportunity to purchase Disks and other Accessories.
For further information:........Ph. Bruce Wylie - t.b.a. (a.h.)
or Steve McNamee - 262 1127 (a.h.)

REGIONAL MEETINGS

CANNON HILL: Last Sat. of the month (12 noon - 12 midnight) in the Cannon Hill State School. Ph. Don Friswell - 343 1735 a.h.
CAPALABA: 3rd Saturday of the month (1pm - 5pm) in the Capalaba State Primary School (Redl. Educ. Centre). Ph. David Adams - 396 8501 a.h.
KINGSTON: 2nd Friday of the month (7pm - 10pm) in the Kingston State School. Ph. Peter Martin - 290 1537 a.h.
PINE RIVERS: 1st Sunday of the month (1pm - 5pm) in the Strathpine State High School. Ph. Barry Bean - 269 7390 a.h.
SHERWOOD: 2nd Friday of the month (7.30pm) in the Graceville State School. Ph. Leigh Winsor - 379 2405 a.h. / Philip Parkin - 818 1172 a.h.
WAVELL HEIGHTS: 2nd Tuesday of the month (7.15pm - 9.45pm) in the Wavell State High School, Childers St. Entrance. Ph. Cor Geels - 263 2839
SUNSHINE COAST meets regularly. For meeting times, dates, places:
Ph. Harvey Riddle - 071/ 421 036 or Ph. Vic Mobbs - 071 / 941 330
MARYBOROUGH/HERVEY BAY: 4th Monday of the month (7pm - 10 pm) in the Sunbury St.School, Alice St. Ph. Terry Baade - 071 / 215059 a.h.

Copying of Commercial Software is NOT allowed at our Meetings!

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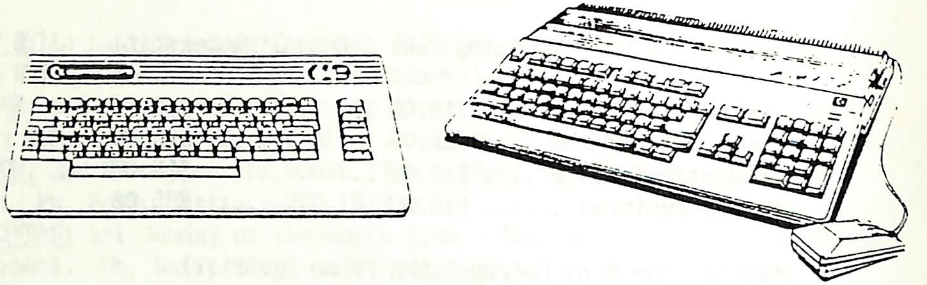

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EDITOR'S NOTES

It's getting more and more difficult to keep up with the ever increasing range of commercial and public domain software. Take as an example the article in this issue by **Rohan Safstrom** about some of his favourite public domain software. One of his favourites is PopCLI. But on the recently released Fish Disk 130 is a program called MACH which includes most of the features of PopCLI, SunMouse, RSLClock, Funckey and several others! Don't be at all surprised though if by next month they will all be supplanted by even more advanced versions!

I have been raiding other magazines again for articles, and this time I found a Superbase article in the March/April '88 issue of the ICPUG newsletter by **Mike Todd**, with some very interesting comments on the new Superbase Professional!

By the way, it seems that at long last software prices are starting to come down. In the April '88 issue of the Australian Commodore & Amiga Review, Superbase Personal was advertised for $165.00. The initial price in Australia was $300.00; not a bad sort of a drop. Now we want to see a price drop in games software. Surely prices between $75.00 to $100.00 for games are plainly ridiculous. At those prices piracy will definitely not go away.

Associate editor **Andre Marino** goes pattern matching in this issue and sheds quite a bit of light on this subject. As well he has done a major review of Benchmark Modula-2. **John Dooley** gives us the ins-and-outs on the Proton 5,25" drives and our interstate correspondent **Paul Gunther** looks at the recently held PC Show.

Elsewhere I have written a sample startup-sequence for single drive A500 owners - it's not very elegant but it works. From a simple startup-sequence it's only a step to writing batch files. I find this aspect of Amy both under-documented and at times downright confusing. As an example try the chapter in the official AmigaDOS manual on *Parameter Substitution by Keyword Name and/or Position*. For this reader it might as well have been written in Sanskrit. As editor I try to keep up with all the current (and not so current) Amiga literature, but I find that the writing of batch files has never been explained in sufficient detail for slow-witted Amiga users like myself.

Can you, dear reader, do better? I'm looking forward to your contributions , but I'm not holding my breath!

Ralph De Vries

RANDOM BITS

MAY MAIN MEETING

Our belated May meeting was quite well attended by our Amiga members. During the introductory part of this meeting our Secretary Norm Chambers announced that he would be retiring from this position after July '88. He will be sorely missed by all of us. This month it was the turn of the C64/128 brigade to move to Room S1, and the Amiga crew used the Main auditorium for a demonstration of the new GP TERM software for Amy, written and demonstrated by Greg Perry and Steve McNamee. Despite failing BBS phone connections and a rather poor quality screen image on the TV projector, the full power of this program was amply demonstrated. We hope to have a full review of this program in the near future.

MAY WORKSHOP

The new format of our workshop was a refreshing change from the usual workshop meetings. Instead of hordes of people queuing up to copy public domain material, we had some twenty odd members there who were there to LEARN something and show what they can do with their computers. As member Gary Lloyd said: "I couldn't get that C routine to work, but at this meeting my problem was solved in no time". Mike Williams showed his new Draw Poker program that he is writing in Basic, and very good it looks too - even our President was impressed! Your editor took some of the newcomers under his wing and showed off some of the latest directory utility programs. As Steve McNamee remarked: "This workshop is a great success, because members are actually DOING something, as well as learning new skills."

Next month (June) it's back to our Public Domain scene, but there will be a Beginners Corner. At the July Workshop we'll have a Beginners Corner, as well as a Basic programming segment, and Andre Marino will demonstrate the new Benchmark Modula-2 compiler. See you there!

SOFTWARE LENDING LIBRARY

We have added the following titles to our software lending library: DELUXE PAINT II, DPAINT ART & UTILITY DISK, PAGESETTER, STARGLIDER, THE PAWN, SILENT SERVICE, MARBLE MADNESS and DISK-2-DISK.

Members who have paid their $5.00 library fee are entitled to borrow these programs during our Main (Bardon) Meetings. IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL BORROWERS! LEAVE THESE DISKS WITH THE WRITE-PROTECTION ON, EVEN IF THE PROGRAM INSTRUCTS YOU TO REMOVE THE WRITE PROTECTION! WE DON'T WANT HIGH SCORES OR OTHER INFORMATION WRITTEN TO THESE DISKS!!!

The program DISK-2-DISK can ONLY be used in conjunction with a 40 track 5,25" drive. It will not work with an 80 track 5,25" drive!

We have also added the latest versions of the three magazine-type disks to our lending library (Amigazine #10, Jumpdisk Apr'88 and Megadisc #6).

MEGADISC

On several occasions your editor has been rather critical of Australia's only Commodore magazine (perhaps it's got something to do with that picture of the gent in sunglasses). However, before I'm being accused of an anti-Australian bias, I would now like to state that the Australian made Megadisc is probably the best magazine-on-disk currently available for the Amiga. At a subscription price of $90.00 for 6 issues (plus 4 FREE public domain disks from their catalogue) I can think of lots worse ways of spending your software dollar. Newcomers to Amy will find it particularly useful for the beginners articles. Subscriptions to: Megadisc Digital Publishing, P.O. Box 759, Crows Nest, 2065.

PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE

Our Amicus range consists now of 26 disks, which will be available to our members for copying at the next workshop. We have also received a series of 10 disks from the Tampa Bay Amiga Group (T.B.A.G.) from Florida in the USA. Most of the material on these disks has already been seen on Fish Disks etc., but they are unusual in that they are bootable disks. Worth having a look at. We also hope to have some of the P.D. disks from the "Amigan Apprentice & Journeyman" range in the future.

LPD WRITER

This word processor has been favourably reviewed in the computer press, except for one fatal flaw:- its very lethal form of copy protection which made it impossible to back up or install on hard disks.

Apparently the manufacturers, Digital Solutions Inc. of Canada, do take notice of these reviews because the latest copies of this program use protection by means of entering a word from the manual - a very welcome trend indeed.

WORDPERFECT DATE BUG

As Paul Gunther mentioned in last month's Cursor, WP gives you yesterday's date when you want to enter today's date. The latest update of WP, dated 7th Jan. 1988 has now cured this bug - today is today!

ANOTHER WORDPERFECT BUG?

Recently I tried again to add my supplementary dictionary to the main dictionary, using the Spell program on the 'Spell.Thes' disk of the latest WP update. Previous attempts to do this resulted in visits from the Guru, but now the program just sits there and does nothing. Am I missing something? Any WP users out there who have succeeded in using this feature? Please let me know. (Ed.)

AMIGA THE MOVIE

For $20.00 you can purchase a Video called "Amiga the Movie" from your local Commodore dealer. If you decide, after viewing the video, that you want to purchase an A-500, your dealer will refund the video when you return it. Also included with your purchase is a $200.00 bonus offer of Amiga software. [A Brisbane dealer even insisted on charging our group $20.00 for a showing at our May meeting - yes they know how to get new customers!]

NEW MARKETING AGREEMENT

Commodore Computers and Ozisoft have announced a joint marketing agreement. This agreement will enhance the companies' sales forces and will allow each to share the others' selling resources and extensive dealer network. Tony Serra said, "the marketing agreement is expected to result in sales increases of up to 15%."

MAIN MEETING DATES FOR 1988

Tuesday 7th June 1988 - *Packet Radio on Amy*
Tuesday 5th July 1988 - *Multi-Tasking - what is it?*
Tuesday 2nd August 1988 - *Annual General Meeting*
Tuesday 6th September 1988 -
Tuesday 4th October 1988 -
Tuesday 1st November 1988 -
Tuesday 6th December 1988 -

ABOUT SUPERBASE

by Mike Todd (I.C.P.U.G. Newsletter March/April '88)

Now that I'm using Superbase Personal more and more I have set up an automated boot disk which does all my setting up for me. The sequence opens a small CLI window at the bottom of the screen, makes my external drive the current drive (since I work with my databases on df1:) and copies any work-files (which are empty copies of the database files) into RAM:. Until recently, my startup-sequence was:

```
COPY df1:work#? to RAM:
STACK 10000
CD df1:
NEWCLI con:0/200/640/56/WORKSPACE
df0:superbase
```

This copies into RAM: all files on my data disk which are prefixed with "work" - then sets up a large stack (the manual recommends 8000, I prefer 10000 to give a large margin) - sets df1: as the current directory - opens the CLI window and then starts Superbase itself. This wastes a fair amount of RAM, since the original CLI window is still present underneath the Superbase window. At first it seemed impossible to get rid of it to conserve memory.

However, using the FROM option on NEWCLI, there's a neat way of doing it. First, I create a new batch file called BOOT-SUPERBASE, which contains exactly the same as the above startup-sequence. Then I create a new startup-sequence as follows:

```
NEWCLI con:0/0/2/2/ FROM s/boot-superbase
ENDCLI TO NIL:
```

This opens a tiny CLI window at the top left of the screen (if you don't believe me, execute the NEWCLI con:0/0/2/2/ command, put the mouse pointer at the very top left of the screen, press the left mouse button and resize the window - clever, eh?). This CLI is instructed to execute the boot-superbase sequence. Meanwhile, the initial CLI is closed leaving me with Superbase running on its own, with a useful CLI at the bottom of the screen.

Superbase - sorting space.

If you've got a hefty diskful of database files, sorting the data (for a QUERY report for instance) will almost certainly involve Superbase needing to write out .srt and/or .tmp files. Unfortunately, the disk is unlikely to be able to accommodate these files, and up pops a disk full error.

There is an easy way around this problem since Superbase puts these temporary files onto the specified current directory, whereas it's possible to open the database files anywhere. So, let's assume that DF1: contains your database disk (and you're about to work with the file called ALBUMS) - put an empty (formatted) disk in df0: and select the directory change option and select df0:. This makes the internal drive the current drive.

Now try to open a file - there are no files listed in the requester (since df0: contains a blank disk) - however, type df1:ALBUMS as the file to open. Superbase will happily go to the external drive and open the file. You can now perform your sort, safe in the knowledge that the temporary files will be written to your blank disk in df0:.

This principle of explicitly indicating the drive on which a database resides can be very useful. For instance, my record collection has two database files - ALBUMS contains the details of each LP, indexed on record number - TRACKS contains track by track details, but the only reference to the LP the track is on is through the record number.

When I produce a report, I link the two database files so that each track is listed with the album title derived from the other file. The TRACKS file is now too big to reside on the same disk as the ALBUMS file so I've separated them onto two disks, and I open the files by explicitly specifying their drives. When it comes to the report, the link still works and results in a faster operation.

Whenever you do start working across two (or more) disks, there is one important word of warning. If you open files by explicitly specifying their drive or disk volume (perhaps to perform a cross-disk link as mentioned earlier) it is vital that field names are not duplicated between the files. Normally Superbase can cope with this - it adds a suffix to the field name stating which file it came from - so that you may have fields such as:

RecordNumber.TRACKS and RecordNumber.ALBUMS

If you've specified the drive, then this may become:

RecordNumber.df0:TRACKS and RecordNumber.df1:ALBUMS

and the colons will mess things up. By keeping the field names different, Superbase won't be forced to add the suffix and there should be no problems.

Superbase Professional

SB Professional has just been released. Potentially it's a truly amazing software product, but it is let down by a lack of coherent thought and an apparent contempt for the end user.

Even their advertising is misleading, with features advertised that are not implemented (and you only discover that fact once you have opened the sealed envelope) but there are assurances that upgraded versions will have these features. The only exception is the advertised ability to read DBase III files - agreed, the advertising flyer points out that this is available only on some versions of the program but that flyer was sent out to Amiga Personal users and it wouldn't be unreasonable to assume that this feature was available on the Amiga - but it isn't.

I had expected to be writing a review for this Newsletter but the product is really not up to it yet. I intend to wait until I have spent more time on it since only with experience can I realistically address some of the problems. However, it's not my intention to suggest that anyone considering buying Superbase Professional should avoid doing so, but I would say that you will not be getting a professional product.

The program's capabilities are fantastic, but inconsistencies within the Database Management Programming language and between the environments of the two packages supplied (the database proper and the forms editor) make life uncomfortable. The manuals are sorely inadequate, with a rather poor style of writing, an unacceptable large number of errors and several glaring omissions. On top of all this, there are several fatal bugs within the database program which have already caused me considerable grief.

On the plus side, I am pleased to see that many of my original complaints about Superbase Personal are no longer applicable. For instance Superbase Professional now allows time fields within the database (now I can do my time sheets). It also has a batch mode where all storage operations are held in RAM initially and then written (remarkably quickly) onto disk at the termination of a session - a significant time saver.

The inclusion of a text editor (NOT a word processor) is also a useful feature - even if does occasionally corrupt files by spasmodically including a spurious control character.

Additional features have also been added to make it easy to load and save query and update parameters, to specify alternative file paths for Superbase utility files, to provide a user-specified printer initialisation sequence, to allow the program to work on its own screen within the Amiga, and to define function keys (although their use is very limited due to the fact that the program doesn't distinguish directly between text stored on a key and a command sequence).

The Amiga version is only one of several versions of Superbase Professional for different machines (including the IBM PC and Atari) and I wonder how these versions compare. As an indicator of the lack of professionalism, the user manuals are written for ALL versions! You have to read around the various machine specific options (which are not always made very clear).

Please don't get me wrong, Superbase Professional is potentially a fantastic product and I have used it fairly extensively. First of all, I converted my major Superbase Personal databases - this was not a straightforward operation due to the fact that some field names in my original databases were illegal in Professional. Making the necessary changes involved using the text editor to edit the definition file to change the field names - itself a difficult task due to the occasional corruption by the text editor.

I am now writing a major application program using the Database Management Language, and this too has been beset with problems - many can be attributed to the poor manuals, some to bugs within the program but the major difficulties have been due to a lack of thought in the way that the language interfaces with the forms facility.

Well, that's enough of Superbase Professional for now - this was not intended to be a review, but it seems to have become one! I hope to have a fuller account of the package at a later date.

THE SIGNALS AT BOOT

There's rhyme and reason to the colours on Amy's screen when you cold boot. Dark gray means the micro processor is running okay; light gray, that ROMs passed a checksum test; white, that RAM is tested and system startup proceeds. That's the normal course of a boot. But if something is wrong, you should see red for a ROM error, green for an error in chip RAM, blue for an error in the customs chips, or yellow if an error occurs before the error-trapping routines (which give you the Guru) are up and running.

Even the keyboard has a self-test routine; if that fails, the caps lock light blinks. One blink means that a check of keyboard ROMs failed; two, that keyboard RAM is not good; three, that the keyboard's internal timer isn't scanning the keyboard properly; four, a short circuit in the keyboard. Such diagnostic signals can tell you (and the folks at the repair shop) where any problems lie.

{From: *The Amigan Apprentice & Journeyman* - Vol.III, No.1 Mar/Apr '88}

BEGINNERS CORNER

FOR SINGLE DRIVE OWNERS

by Ralph De Vries

Recently a relative of mine bought an Amiga 500 and monitor. Because of lack of finance no second disk drive could be purchased at this stage and thus we came up against the problem of disk copying and formatting with the minimum amount of disk swapping. So I modified the startup sequence of Amy as follows:

```
if EXISTS sys:system
   path sys:system add
endif
echo "Moving CLI Commands to RAM:C"
copy df0:system/diskcopy to df0:C
copy df0:system/format to df0:C
cd sys:c
Makedir ram:c
copy copy to ram:c
Path RAM:c add
copy cd to ram:c
copy list to ram:c
copy dir to ram:c
echo "(Copy/Cd/List/Dir)"
copy type to ram:c
copy newcli to ram:c
copy endcli to ram:c
copy info to ram:c
echo "(Type/Newcli/Endcli/Info)"
copy run to ram:c
copy delete to ram:c
copy diskcopy to ram:c
copy format to ram:c
echo "(Run/Delete/Diskcopy/Format)"
copy echo to ram:c
copy execute to ram:c
copy date to ram:c
copy assign to ram:c
```

```
echo "(Echo/Execute/Date/Assign)"
makedir ram:libs
copy df0:libs/icon.library to ram:libs
path ram:libs add
echo " "
echo "Commands Installed"
SetMap usa1
Addbuffers df0: 10
; Addbuffers df1: 10
echo "Enter date & time in the format: DD-MMM-YY HH:MM"
Date > nil: ?
LoadWb
failat 30
endcli > nil:
```

This batch file (that's what a startup-sequence is) first copies the Format and Diskcopy commands from the systems: directory to the c:directory, then creates a c: directory in ram:, which is followed by the copying of a series of c: directory files into the c: directory in ram. After every four files are copied a line of text tells you which files have been copied.

Please note that I have copied a total of 16 commands to RAM. There is no earthly reason why you shouldn't put more or fewer commands into RAM, except possibly memory constraints. Just do your own thing!

Because both the FORMAT and DISKCOPY command also need a file called ICON.LIBRARY to operate (that file creates the actual disk icons), it was also necessary to copy this file to RAM. However as this file normally lives in the LIBS: directory, we first had to create a LIBS directory in RAM (see lines 2 - 4 above). You are now told that the "Commands have been installed", and this is followed by the rest of the startup-sequence which is fairly standard except for two lines. The semi-colon in front of the line "Addbuffers df1: 10" means that this line is treated as a comment or REM statement and is not acted upon. If and when a second drive is attached to the system, it's a simple matter of removing the semi-colon to activate this line. I also cut the buffers back to 10 instead of 20, because every buffer gobbles up 512 bytes of memory. (You can cut them out altogether but that slows disk access down by quite a bit.) The "Enter Date & Time" request simply expects the user to enter the present date and time so that all files are properly time-stamped. If you don't care about proper dates or times a simple return will do.

I don't pretend that this is either a very good or very fast startup-sequence, bit it will allow the single drive owner to go into the CLI and perform the most common disk functions without being asked every time to insert the workbench disk, and thus it's a real time saver.

Have you written a better single-drive startup-sequence? Why not send me a copy for publication in a following issue of CURSOR?

PATTERN MATCHING UNDER AMIGADOS

by Andre Marino

It is a common misconception amongst Amiga owners that AmigaDOS does not support pattern matching. The major reason way people seem to think it does not is simply because it does not use the IBM PC pattern matching use of a '*' character. Instead, AmigaDOS uses the following characters :

?, #, (), |, %, and, '

Each of these will be described in turn.

QUESTION MARKS - ?

The question mark is used to match a single character but not the null string (where the null string has length zero). Thus, the pattern ?ALL would match TALL, WALL, CALL, FALL, ... etc. but not ALL because the question mark MUST match a single character.

THE POUND SIGN -

The pound sign is used to match any number of repetitions of a single character (unless it is grouped using () — see below) including no repetitions at all (ie. the null string). An example of a pattern using the pound sign would be #FILE which would match FILE, FFILE, FFFILE, FFFFILE,... etc. It would also match ILE since the null string is allowed.

[Ed: The # sign is also known as the hatch (or even hash) sign.]

COMBINING # AND ?

The real power of AmigaDOS pattern matching becomes evident when we combine the use of the # and ? symbols. When the pattern #? is used it will match ANY string of characters (is equivalent to the use of a * in MS/PC DOS) including no characters at all.

For example #?ALL would match SMALL, TALL, FALL, CALL, ..., in fact any word ending in ALL including ALL. Another example would be #?AS#? would match AS, ASHES, ASTRONAUT, ..., TRASH, SMASH, ..., FASTER etc ...... As you can see the number of possible matches is enormous.

PARENTHESIS- ()

The parenthesis may be used as a grouping operation. This allows a group of characters to be considered as a single component of a pattern. This is best demonstrated by the following pattern, #(TIME), would match TIME, TIMETIME, TIMETIMETIME,..... etc. Another more complex example would be #(F??) which would match F, FF, FFF,... , FS, FSFS, ..., FSFSFS, FOR, FORFOR, FORFORFOR, ..., FORFIT, FITFOR, ..., FATF, ..., FFFAX. The list goes on, you could probably sit down for hours and list all the possible combinations (lucky the Amiga does all of this for you).

THE VERTICAL BAR - |

A vertical bar is used to match two or more patterns against each name to be matched. Thus, A|B would match A or B. If both A and B existed then both would be matched. A more complex example would be P(ERF|ROT)ECT which would match PERFECT and also PROTECT.

THE PERCENT - %

This character is used to match the null string which of course contains no characters at all. This is useful when combined with the vertical bar. The pattern (?|%) will match any single character or no character at all. Another example is CHO(O|%)SE which will match CHOSE and CHOOSE.

APOSTROPHES - '

These are used to get around the problem which is created by AmigaDOS assigning special meanings to characters such as #, ?, etc. If a file name contains one of these characters we can match this special character using the apostrophe followed by the special character we wish to match. This is best demonstrated by an example pattern

(SOME|NO)MORE'? which will match SOMEMORE? and also NOMORE?.

This rule also applies for the apostrophe itself, since it also has a special meaning. We can match a string containing the apostrophe by simply placing two apostrophes in the pattern, one after the other. For example ?ON''T would match DON'T and also WON'T.

SUMMARY

The Amiga does in fact support much more powerful pattern matching capabilities than MS/PC DOS as we have seen. The only drawback is that not all commands under AmigaDOS support the pattern matching described. Pattern matching is mostly limited to the LIST, DIR, COPY, and DELETE commands.

THE AMATEUR AMIGA USER'S GUIDE TO PUBLIC DOMAIN

by ROHAN SAFSTROM

Much of the ever-growing collection of public domain software available to Amiga users is directed towards rather specialised areas. I have seen lists of "useful PD programs" in magazines and newsletters which include various terminal emulators, development and debugging tools, monitors of CPU use, etc. While these programs may indeed be very useful to certain people, the majority of Amiga users, like myself, will have no use for them, and may well be turned away from PD altogether. This would be a pity, as there is a veritable cornucopia of interesting things to be found, even by the complete novice, in the freely distributable disks.

In this article (and maybe others, depending on its reception), I shall present views and comments on a number of PD programs which I consider the amateur Amiga user will find useful and interesting.

DiskMan - by G. Cunningham - Fish #82

If I could only ever have one program from the Public Domain, this would be it. DiskMan is, to my mind, the single most useful program in my disk collection, and the one I consider the most indispensable. (I have six disks with this utility on!) Why is it so useful and important? Some dull history may help to explain.

The designers of the Amiga, in their desire to make the machine as user-friendly as possible concentrated, it seems, on the Workbench interface to the virtual exclusion of DOS. This resulted in a simple operating system for first-time and occasional users, but an unnecessarily complex and intimidating DOS system. File copying, batch file creation, startup alterations, RAM disk handling, and other vital operations must be entered through the Command Line Interface (which is every bit as intimidating as it sounds, especially to a beginner). The CLI uses AmigaDOS commands which, for all their apparent similarity to MS/DOS, still may as well be in Mongolian. To make matters worse (if that is possible), in CLI you cannot edit what you have typed in, so that if you make a mistake you must type it all in again. You also must remember long pathways, the correct syntax (to the last semi-colon), and generally what the hell you started out to do.

This is where DiskMan comes in. Upon booting DiskMan presents you with a three-window screen; one on each half of the screen (left and right) and a long one across the bottom of those two. The two large windows represent directories (either whole disks, or parts of them), while the horizontal window has a number of buttons which cause certain actions to occur when clicked. If you start by clicking the button "DF0:" then the directory box which was used last will list the contents of the disk in the internal drive. (Similar for DF1: or DH0:, etc) The directories are highlighted a different colour to files, and by double-clicking a directory you are presented with its contents in that box. This makes searching through disks very easy, with scroll bars on the windows if directories are particularly large.

By clicking a file (or as many files as you like in a directory) in one of the windows and having a directory displayed in the remaining window, it is a simple matter of clicking COPY to copy the highlighted file(s). This makes disk organisation a dream. Similarly, you can move files between directories on the same disk, create directories, or importantly, delete files. (The average Workbench disk contains hordes of unnecessary files just waiting to be deleted. See Andre Marino's article in April '88 Cursor)

But DiskMan does much more than just this. By selecting a file and then clicking READ you can read the contents of that file (if it is a readable format). Similarly, you can PRINT a file if so desired. You can even SHOW a picture file (stored in IFF format). It is a simple matter to make new directories, RENAME files, open a new CLI (for whatever reason), or RUN executable programs. In fact DiskMan seems to be able to circumvent the need for ANY use of the CLI should you so desire.

I would suggest you put DiskMan on a disk to itself, with a full complement of the c directory commands, and adjust the startup sequence to read something like:

```
Addbuffers df0: 15
Diskman
LoadWB
Endcli > nil:
```

This will launch you straight into DiskMan in about 15 seconds upon booting. To edit the startup sequence is a simple matter of selecting the "startup-sequence" file in the s directory and clicking EDIT. You are then taken into a text editor (Much better then Ed) where you can fiddle to your heart's content.

As can be imagined there is a trade-off for this usefulness; it uses up some 100K of memory. However, this is not really of significance when you consider that the uses of DiskMan are generally file handling (moving, copying, etc), and you seldom have anything else running at the time. I have noticed a couple of bugs in DiskMan: it doesn't like copying really big files (400K+), and tends to crash while trying; and sometimes it will crash if you try to SHOW a file that is not a picture.

Apart from that there is little I can find to criticise.

DiskMan 2.0 - by G. Cunningham - Amigan Disk 11

Version 2 of the superb DiskMan promises much but doesn't quite deliver the goods. The first thing you notice is the hi-res interlace screen of eight colours. It flickers. The file, directory, and command names are tiny, your pointer seems clumsy, and it is difficult to be precise in movements. It is not quite so user-friendly, and that is the great advantage of DiskMan.

The command system has been refined, with user-definable commands now added - a clever touch, but not really necessary. You can now use whatever particular text editor you prefer; similarly whichever SHOW utility you like can be called up. With the hi-res screen usually the whole contents of a disk and/or directory can be seen at once, but this is not such a great advantage. The copying process is now smoother with a major plus in not having to create a directory on your target disk: it does this for you now. The 400K file size bug remains, however.

A little annoying also is the way when other functions are called up (like text editing) you must click the front/back gadget to get to them. You cannot change the colour through preferences like in the original version, and the flicker and tiny print really get to you. All in all, DiskMan 2.0 disappointed me in terms of its user-friendliness, but I still recommend it highly as an valuable tool with improved functions from its predecessor. (I still use DiskMan 1!)

PopCLI - by J. Toebes - Fish 84 - Amicus 15 - Almost Everywhere

This little baby is a beauty! Stick it in your c directory (only a couple of 1000 bytes) and include the command "PopCLI" in your startup sequence and it is installed. Then, whenever you hit ESC and Left-Amiga (or Commodore on A500) simultaneously a CLI window appears. You can do whatever it is you do in CLI windows, close it, or open another by the same means. Even better is the "screen blanking" facility it has built-in to it. In your startup you assign a number after the command, as in "PopCLI 600". Then, after 600 seconds (or whatever you prefer) of complete inactivity on the keyboard or mouse, the screen will turn off, saving on the phosphor life. A simple movement of mouse or touching any key will restore the screen to normality.

REVIEWS

PROTON 5,25" NEC DISK DRIVE

by John Dooley

A half height drive supplied with hardware circuit board offering full compatibility with Amiga external 3,5" drives, except that it uses 5,25" disks. Finished in colour matched metallic case with 50cm cable that plugs directly into the external drive port. Has pass-through external drive port on rear of drive allowing attachment of further daisy chained external drives.

Price: A$340.00, less 10% User Group discount upon proof of membership, plus A$10.00 Insurance and A$6.00 freight by overnight courier. All up A$322.00

Performance: The drive (DF1:) performs very close to the internal drive (DF0:) in read operations and no apparent difference is seen. On writing to the drive a delay is noticed and that qualitatively appears to be related to a delay in sensing a disk in the drive before disk access starts rather than due to slower write times per se. The method used to check the times is relatively primitive and uses the Amiga's own clock to print start and stop times. The gross validity of this was checked with a watch and timed read and times found to be comparable. Any commands used in the batchfiles to test read and write (below) were transferred to RAM: and accessed from there rather than including Workbench delays. The batch files used are below along with a RAM: directory at test time.

```
'USE OF FILE:  EXECUTE BRT DF1: and EXECUTE BRT DF0:'
'TESTFILE MUST EXIST IN RAM (108K LONG IN THIS CASE)'
'FOR THE WRITE TEST AND ON TARGET DRIVE FOR READ TEST'

'BRT'
.k drive/a
ram:echo "start time for test read"
ram:date
ram:type >nil <drive> testfile

'USE OF FILE:  EXECUTE BWT DF1: and EXECUTE BWT DF0:'

'BWT'
.k drive/a
ram:echo "Start write time"
ram:date
ram:copy ram:testfile  to <drive>
ram:date

'N.B. ECHO, DATE, TYPE, COPY, EXECUTE ARE ALSO IN RAM
TO REDUCE DISK ACCESS TO A MINIMUM'
```

Access times:		READ	WRITE	(108K TESTFILE)
	DF1:	10.0	26	seconds
	DF0:	10.0	23	"

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The drive performs to specifications. The access time differences are minimal at worst and are easily overcome by the value for money and 6 months warranty supplied with the drive. The drive has performed flawlessly for me since I have owned it (2 months) and I recommend it as a good purchase given that Commodore are trying to charge $499 for an external drive. The one problem that you encounter with any 5,25" drive is if you have to "Insert workbench enhanced: into any drive". The computer knows a real current WB and a copy in order for the machine to respond you need to make a nibble copy of your workbench and insert this into the 5.25 inch drive but don't have the original and nibble copy in df0: and df1: respectively, or the machine hangs! Support is the only major flaw I found with the company, they took their time to get me the unit after I paid and I was not pleased! Lots of phone calls and an eventual "discussion" with one of the staff followed by the mention of a possible "review" for the user group ensured a final prompt delivery after many "Real Soon Now" responses. As I have been very busy since writing this article it comes a little late because I hear that you can get a 1010 external 3,5" Commodore drive for $349.00 - still for my purposes the 5.25 inch disks are substantially cheaper.

Sorry! One technical question by me! This drive is effectively the same as a 1010 but takes 5,25" disks. I read somewhere (this month's C. and A. Review, Vol.5, No.3, Page 16, Amiga insert) that with the Transformer software and Dos 3.2 that you can use the 1010 to recognise IBM 3,5" disks (a la Toshiba 1100). Can you, if yes, and what do I need on the IBM side? Can a similar thing be done with this 5,25" drive of mine for 5,25" IBMs?
[Ed: Only if you have access to 80-track (720K) MS-DOS stuff, which than means that you cannot read the 'standard' 40-track MS-DOS disks!]

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BENCHMARK MODULA-2

by Andre Marino

INTRODUCTION

MODULA-2 is a language which was derived from PASCAL. The language was written by Niklaus Wirth, the same person who wrote PASCAL. The motivation behind writing MODULA-2 was to fix the annoying features of PASCAL while also extending the language to enable separately compiled program units. This enables modular design of programs, thus the name of the language "MODULA-2". In case you are wondering why it has the suffix two, well there was a "MODULA-1" which later developed into "MODULA-2".

With the ability to produce separately compiled program units a programmer can build up a "library" of commonly used procedures, such as sort algorithms, which have been shown to execute correctly. Thus, the programmer no longer has to rewrite his favorite sort algorithm he simply uses the separately compiled module whenever the sort is required. The end effect is that programs may be developed more rapidly since the sort routine has been proven to execute correctly and the programmer simply utilizes this procedure rather then starting from scratch and rewriting it.
~~~

MODULA-2 like PASCAL is a strictly typed language. The fact that MODULA-2 is strictly typed means that many common errors are picked up at compile time instead of suddenly "appearing" at run time. The usual results of a weakly typed language is that the program does not work and often many hours are spent trying to locate the bug.

The language "C" is an example of a poorly typed language. In "C" a programmer may simply break most rules and many of the present "C" compilers will not pick these errors up while others simply issue a warning at compile time. This does not mean that "C" is necessarily a bad language but simply means those simple errors are often hard to pick up. In theory one could reason a program written in MODULA-2 should contain less unknown bugs then a program written in C (under the assumption that a competent programer is implementing the program).

Sometimes the fact that a language is strongly typed will mean that certain programs are impossible to write since one must convert types. This is a common problem in PASCAL. In MODULA-2 a type casting operation has been provided for this reason. It allows the user to break the strongly typed aspect of the language. These operations should be used with caution and only when absolutely necessary. The major difference between "C" and MODULA-2 is that in "C" illegal type casting is usually not picked up by the compiler and at most the compiler may produce a warning. However, MODULA-2 requires the programer to explicitly specify the type casting operation and thus highlights the fact that strong type checking is being broken.

MODULA-2 also provides some real-time primitives which may be used to address physical locations in memory, manipulate bits in memory and a set of co-routine primitives (this one is not always implemented because it depends on the type of operating system). All these features make it possible to use MODULA-2 in much the same way as "C", an operating systems programing language.

Over the past few months there have been several different MODULA-2 compilers released. Amongst these was the TDI MODULA-2 compiler and also a more limited version of MODULA-2 was released on the FISH disks. However, none of these compilers was particularly reliable, most where bug riddled and also required at least 1MEG of memory to run.

BENCHMARK

Benchmark MODULA-2 was recently released and a friend of mine purchased his copy. After a quick demonstration he gave at a meeting I was convinced that this was worth buying.

I ordered my copy which sells for US$199 and received it in about a week. The total cost came out to be AUS $356. It would probably cost you more if you were to buy it, since my copy was not AIR-Mailed to Australia. Unfortunately, there are no dealers for AVANT-GRADE SOFTWARE in Australia so you have to go direct to America.

The package which I purchased came with two disks and a huge 700 page manual. This is the base package which includes the compiler, linker, integrated editor, error lister, Amiga interface modules, a disk full of demos which when un-arced expands to 3 disks, arcer, and lastly 5 utility programs. These utility programs are the compiler configuration utility, quick load utility, procedure statistics utility, symbol file cross reference utility, and the object module generator utility.

The standard package works on a 512K AMIGA. The first disk in the package boots straight away and loads up the integrated editor with a small demo program. From here you can compile, link and run the demo with about 3 keystrokes. The editor is based on microemacs. Although other editors such as Uedit should be fairly easy to integrate with the compiler and linker.

Unfortunately, due to lack of time I was not able to produce a list of "benchmarks" for this MODULA-2 compiler but I must say that it beats the living daylights out of any of the compilers available for the Amiga, including Lattice C, and TDI MODULA-2. Actually the speed of the compiler is quite similar to TURBO PASCAL V3.0 for the IBM's (cough!) and occasionally reaches the speeds of TURBO PASCAL V4.0 depending on the program being compiled. So all those programmers out there waiting for TURBO PASCAL forget it, it's better to learn modula and use Benchmark.

The speed of this package makes it much more usable then any of the MODULA-2 compilers available on the IBM PC's. I have found that if the program is to run on an IBM PC it is much quicker to use the Amiga as the development tool and then simply port the code to the IBM PC once all modules have been completed. This saves many hours of waiting around for the PC to compile link and run a program which when done on the Amiga takes only a few seconds.

Executables produced are comparable to Lattice C V4.0 and on occasions are smaller than those produced using Lattice. The linker is obviously an intelligent one only including what is required from imported modules. The most impressive part of the package is the blinding speed at which the linker does its work. It easily beats Blink and TDI's linker in some quick speed comparisons and is in fact often orders of magnitude faster than the compiler, not that the compiler is at all slow.

The Amiga interface provided in Benchmark maps on to that of "C" and has simply been restructured to support the syntax of MODULA. It is also similar in most aspects to the interface provided by TDI MODULA-2. People swapping from TDI will find most programs very simple to convert.

In the three weeks that I have been using the package I have not found any bugs. This may be a short time to test the reliability of the package but the compiler has been used in the States for quite some time so it must be fairly well debugged by now.

There is however some limitations imposed by Benchmark. I am not familiar with the precise details of limitations but one of the limitations is a restriction on the total size of data within a module.

DOCUMENTATION

The documentation for the compiler came in the form of a book containing 700 pages (about ROM kernel manual size). The manual is divided into 31 chapters with 10 Appendices.

I was very impressed with the documentation not only was it easy to read but the manual covered EVERY aspect of the package. The quality of the documentation provided not only equaled the quality of the software but the documentation in my opinion is the first compiler package for the Amiga which has provided the correct type of documentation.

All aspects of each of the provided utilities is explained in a neatly structured manual which exereses the details in a manner that any reader familiar with MODULA-2 will be able to understand. Error messages are provided both in a brief format and also an expanded format.

The two annoying features of the manual was that no index was provided (but does have a Table of Contents). The only other annoying feature is that the cross reference of procedures and variables does not provide the page number on which the procedure or variable may be found.

OTHER PRODUCTS

Leon Frenkel the author of Benchmark does also provide additional library modules at a price of US$99. The library modules available are Simplified Amiga Libraries, "C" Language Libraries and also the IFF Libraries/Image Resource Utility. There is also a source level debugger available but I have no price for this at the moment.

BUG FIXES AND FUTURE UPDATES

All bug fixes for the version purchased by a registered user are free of charge (apart from the cost of media and postage). While updates to the compiler version are planned to be released by Leon about every 6 to 12 months and should be available to registered users for a reasonable price.

SUMMARY

Benchmark is certainly the best compiler available for the Amiga at the present time. The fact that the Amigas operating system was written in "C" is not a drawback due to the comprehensive bindings provided. The documentation is excellent as is the compiler and provided utilities and the price is reasonable. Thus, there seems to be no reason for considering "C" anymore as the ONLY viable programing language for the Amiga.

PC88

THE 10TH AUSTRALIAN PERSONAL COMPUTER SHOW SYDNEY 20-23 March 1988

Reporter : Paul Gunther

Follows is a brief run-down on happenings at PC88 held recently in Sydney. News from the Commodore stand ... Commodore did not have a stand at PC88, this was understandable, probably due to the exorbitant prices that were asked for the privilege of renting floor space. Those who could afford floor space were out to sell business. Stringent rules to keep out unaccompanied children under the age of 18 meant that the atmosphere was definitely business.

Ok, once inside, what was new from Commodore :

The Amiga 500 and 2000 models were featured prominently in a promotional video released by Commodore. This video ran for approximately ten minutes of hard sell - Commodore style. Made in the U.S. the video presentation professionally portrayed the Amiga doing what it does best - Video animation, Business graphics, Audio packages, Professional Art and Rendering packages, Educational Software and Arcade entertainment products to name a few. The producers found some of the premium software for the Amiga and showed it off in style (e.g. Videoscape - 3d, Word Perfect etc). Old faithful, John Laws put in his word or two for the Amiga as he sat next to an A500 showing off Eric Graham's Juggler demo. As I found out from the dealer showing the video, Commodore handed over the video the morning of the opening of the show. Good as this video was a presentation BETTER than this one was around but not in time for the show. The dealer in question, FAIRSTAR Computer Centre in Parramatta was also having a special for A2000 purchasers - A standard 1Meg A2000 unit with A1084 Monitor with 2Meg thrown in - all for $2995. Also shown was an NEC MultiSync monitor running off an A2000. This monitor offered no improvement to the Amiga interlace graphics mode screen flicker. Stick with Commodore's monitor.

A company specializing in computer graphics - NERIKI Computer Graphics, Crows Nest, offered the Amiga as a graphics workhorse suitable for video work. Some products for the Amiga shown were the NERIKI Image Master system which simply transfers the contents of an Amiga screen in any of its display modes (including hold and modify) to a Polaroid Palette device for the production of 35mm slides, negatives, prints and overhead transparencies. An A2000 genlock was shown off with a live camera signal being mixed with titles from the software Package TV*TEXT.

[Ed: Paul's article also included some more rumours about CBM's future plans, but these are now superseded by the following article.]

THE CHAIRMAN HAS SPOKEN

At a press conference on 16th March 1988 during the CEBIT Show held in West Germany Commodore's chairman Irving Gould talked about the company's successful financial picture and about future marketing plans. Here are a few extracts:

Plans for the Amiga 2500 and 3000 were discussed, but it was stressed that "the A2000 will remain compatible with all new attributes of new Amiga products". Details of new products were:

AMIGA 2500AT:
68020/68881 - 80286 Bridgeboard - 40 Mb Autoboot hard drive.

AMIGA 2500UX:
68020/68881 - Autoboot hard drive (optional 100 Mb hard drive)
Unix 5.3 compatible operating system.

The Unix included with the 2500UX is a proprietary high performance windowing user shell. Also optional for the 2500UX will be a tapestream storage device. Both for release in 1988?

Work on the Amiga 3000 is continuing (based on the Motorola 68030 chip), and release is slated for the 1989 calendar year. Some of the attributes of this machine include networking capabilities and multiple mass storage devices up to 2.2 Gigabytes.

Other new products shown include:

A2620 - 68020/68881/68851 co-processor for the A2000 with 2 - 4 Mega bytes of RAM.
A2024 - High resolution gray scale Amiga monitor.
A2300 - Amiga 2000 Genlock.
A2286 - 80286 based Amiga Bridgeboard.
Transputer Project

Chairman Gould announced no plans for Commodore to increase its computer prices due to DRAM price increases. We will continue to supply our market at price levels now in effect. It was also announced that enhanced graphics chips with non-interlace mode will be available for the Amiga 500 and Amiga 2000.

Commodore is the leader in the West German microcomputer industry, with a market share of over 50%. With professional systems, Commodore ranks in 2nd place in Germany, and is unchallenged in the home market. European press reaction to the conference has been very positive. Some of the headlines from the show include: "Commodore and Nixdorf Grow, Grow, Grow" and "Commodore attacks Professional and Business Market".

[Information supplied by Lauren Brown of Commodore Amiga Technical Support (CATS)]

BYTES

FOR SALE

AUDIO DIGITIZERS to suit Amiga 1000/2000/500 - as described in Mar'88. edition of Cursor. (Line and Microphone Input) — $70.00 each.

Contact Robert Googe at the Main Meeting (Bardon) or at the Ithaca Workshop, or phone (07) 281 8316 (a.h.).

"Bytes" are computer-related adverts of a non-commercial nature, which are FREE to all financial members of our group.

DISK LIBRARY

Amicus 21:

Target - Makes each mouseclick sound like a gunshot.
Sand - Simple game of sand that follows the mouse pointer.
PropGadget - Proportional Gadget Example.
Piano - Simple piano sound program.
EHB - Checks to see if you have extra-half-bright-graphics.
CelScripts - Makes cel animation scripts for Aegis Animator.
This disk has electronic catalogues for Amicus 1 - 20 and Fish 1 - 80.

Amicus 22:

Cycles - Light Cycle Game.
Show-PrintII - Views and prints IFF pictures, incl. overscan pics.
PrtDvGen2.3 - Latest version of printer driver generator.
Animations - Videoscape animations of planes and Boing ball.
Garden - Makes fractal gardenscapes.
BasicSorts - Examples of binary search & insertion sorts in AmigaBasic.

AMICUS 23:

1812Overture - 16 Minutes of music - needs DMCS.
Instruments - 25 Instruments for use in several music programs.
ListINSTR - Lists instruments DMCS won't load.
Music - Collection of 14 classical pieces.
SMUSPlay etc. - Three Amiga Music Players .

AMICUS 24:

AmiBug - Makes fly walk across WorkBench at random intervals.
bmon - System Monitor; AmigaBasic Program.
BNTools - Three assembly language programs: SetLace - Why - LoadIt.
BoingMachine - Ray-tracing demo of a perpetual Boing-making machine.
CodeDemo - Modula-2 prgm. converts assembler object files to inline CODE statements. Incl. screen scrolling example.
Daisy - Example of using translator & narrator devices.
DGCS - Deluxe Grocery Construction Set. Prints out shopping lists.
Iconize - Convert IFF brushes to WorkBench icons.

MonoLace - Resets Preferences to several monochrome shades.
Moose - Random background program.
QuickFlix - Script driven animation & slide show prgm. for IFF images.
Sectorama - Disk Sector editor.
VirusCheck - Bill Koester's documentation on the original SCA virus.

AMICUS 25:

8ColorWB - Modifies WorkBench so that 3 bitplanes are used.
BrushIcon - Converts brushes to icons.
DiskWipe - Fast replacement for DELETE command.
Dodge - Modula-2 Prgm to move WorkBench screen around.
Egraph - Graphing prgm. to read x,y values and displays them on screen.
Guru - CLI program to print out possible reasons for GURU meditations.
Keep1.1 - Message managing prgm. for telecommunications.
KeyBird - Basic prgm. to edit KeyMaps.
KickPlay - Several patches to modify a Kickstart disk.
Kill.fastdir - Gets red of all those .fastdirs created by CLIMate.
LaceWB - Changes between interlace to non-interlace mode without re-booting your WorkBench.
MailList - Mailing list database.
Nemesis - Graphics demo prgm.
ProWrite - Shareware utility for Prowrite users.
Snow - Basic prgm. to make snow flake designs.
SoftBallStats - Maintain softball statistics/ team records.
Sptil - Print Spooler and editor.

AMICUS 26:

BMP - Plays 8SVX sampled sounds in the background.
Claz2 - Convert IFF files to Postscript files.
DC - Replacement for DISKCHANGE command for WorkBench use.
DirMaster - Disk Catalogue prgm.
FunBut - Lets Function key act like left mouse button.
HexDump - Modula-2 prgm. to display memory locations in hex.
Lexical - Analyze a text file and give Gunning-Fog a.o. indices.
Scribble - Handy routines for Scribble2 users.
SDBackup - Hard Disk backup program.
ShowPt - CLI prgm. to change your pointer to a different shape.
SoundScape - Sound routines from Amazing Computing articles.
Tartan - Basic prgm. to design Tartan plaids.
TCB - Prints info about tasks & processes in the system.

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If unable to return library material before a meeting, members may also leave this with their nearest management committee member (but please ring first!).

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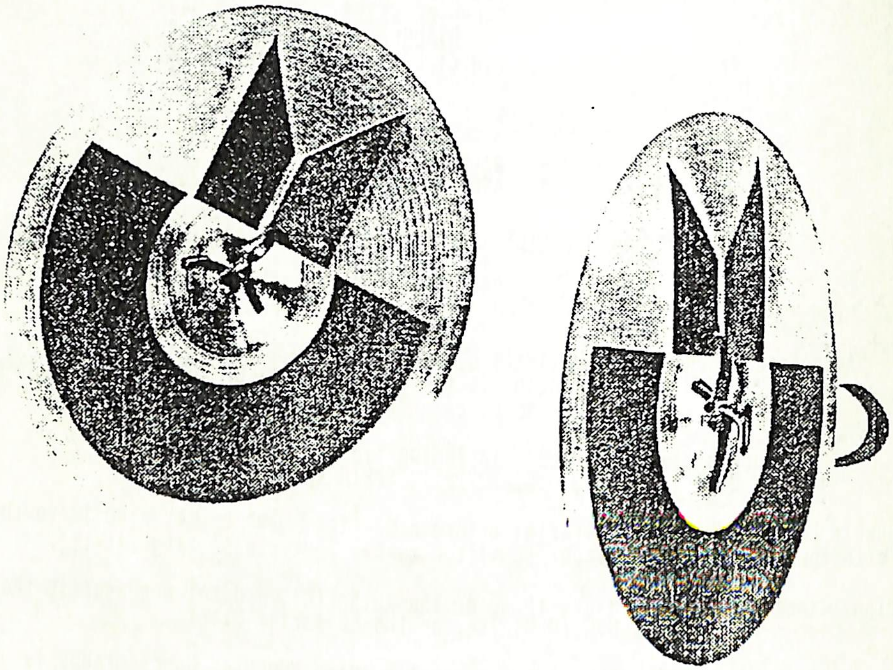
The Number One Symbol in Computers. Commodore.



commodore
COMPUTER
Keeping up with you.